Design Sense

A newsletter on Packaging, Product Styling, Store Planning and Merchandising trends
Lippincott & Margulies, Inc., Industrial Designers, 430 Park Avenue, New York
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Design Can't Stand Still

If Rip Van Winkle were to take a short nap of about five years between now and 1960, he would probably awake again in a world in which few of the things he knew in 1956 still looked the same. This last decade has seen what is, it seems safe to say, the greatest acceleration in our history, of new design, new approaches, new products and new possibilities. The speed has increased in geometric proportion to the increase in competition. The rate will not lessen during the coming years.

There are two dangers in this trend from the merchandiser's point of view, which relate directly to the problem of design. One of these is the danger that the clamor for "something new" can deteriorate into a spate of unrelated, unneeded and unmarketable newness that has little relation to the real demands of the market. The other extreme, and equally dangerous, is the feeling that there are really no new directions possible -- that there are no new good ideas.

Both of these attitudes are closely related to panic. One is frantic grasping for a solution to a problem which usually cannot be solved by design alone; the other is resignation and surrender.

But both the knowing marketer and the trained industrial designer know that while design cannot stand still, its directions are determined by the clearcut facts of everyday existence. A product with a better design sells better. A product which has a "new" design (new just for the sake of newness) is likely to fall on its face. The design of the Marlboro package is not new -- flip top boxes are no novelty. But it is better, and meets a specific need in the cigarette market, one which has been neglected for years.

There is scarcely a product in today's market place which could not be improved by redesign. Nor is there any lack of new directions in

which design can move for these products. This arises from the fact that in today's market design must express function as well as esthetic fashion. The more we learn about possible functions of a product, the more new functions for products we develop, the more opportunity will we have for a creative design approach.

Far from being at a point where we are running out of ideas, we may well be at the beginning of one of the most productive periods yet. A look at the super market shelves, at the appliance store, at the new materials and new products coming forward is evidence enough.

The real test for all of us will be our ability to comprehend and to anticipate the real needs that will arise, and in the most creative manner.

There is a new key element in creativity today, and that is planning. It takes three years to tool for a new car design, many months to create new packaging machinery. Both the industrial designer and the marketing specialist therefore must be prophets as well as business men. New design must be programmed today in the same way that plant expansion is planned -- years in advance. This type of planning presents great possibilities for a truly organized approach to developing new design. It is also insurance against either of the extremes resulting from panic. By design planning, you are sure that you are getting new approaches, you guarantee an awareness of design trends, and you have the greatest asset of planned creativity, the best source of productive and provocative ideas.

J. Gordon Lippincott and Walter Margulies

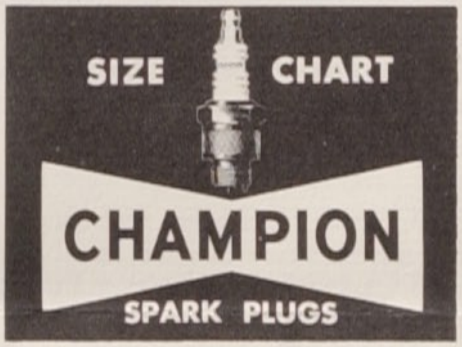
A Day in the Life of a Brandmark

"Nothing I like better than getting around to see my friends"

(On famous route 17 on the banks of the Willowemoc)
-- "This may be fishing country, but I'm always on duty"

"They tell me that my face inspires confidence"

"Here I am in my work clothes"



"Always take some time out for a little quiet study"

"Versatile, hmnn?"

"Plugging away at providing sparks -- all in a day's work"

Whose Brand of Beer is That?

Some new beer designs by Lippincott & Margulies.

SOME GUIDES TO BEER PACKAGING... It's no secret that consumers have great difficulty in distinguishing beers by taste alone, or for that matter cigarettes, or ice cream or coffee. Yet the beer drinker will tell you the reasons for his beer choice in no uncertain terms, and will express himself in an equally positive way about the brand he likes least. There is little doubt that packaging plays a large part in his preference for one brand as against another.

The increasing competition, both locally and nationally, between brewers, has led many firms to reconsider their packaging as part of their entire marketing program. While packaging problems such as the change to foil absorbed manufacturers in the past, today the package for beers is receiving new scrutiny, including a closer look into the psychological implications. At our office we have had nearly a dozen beer packaging problems during the last year, a great increase over previous years and indicative of the trend.

WHAT IS A BEER PACKAGE?

This may seem like a foolish question, since everyone knows that it is either a bottle or a can. But, in fact, the package is more than that. It is, for the consumer, the first evidence that within its confines are all the things he expects of beer. And these are many, for beer has many social and emotional meanings for the beer drinker. He connects it with his youth, with good times, with many tender and sentimental memories.

To the consumer, beer is a highly sensual, social, gay, contemplative drink. It is also slow, wet and cool. There is, the psychologists tell us, a real "beer hunger" or a craving for the beverage. This has nothing to do with thirst -- water can take care of that as effectively. Beer satisfies a temporary need. The first place where a beer drinker has an opportunity to fulfill that need is when he sees the package. The package must express the entire personality of the beer; it must capture these social and emotional meanings that the drink has for the consumer and express them visually.

Yet until recently, beer packaging took few of these motivational questions into account. Take the matter of color: in a study which Dr. Ernest Dichter and the Institute for Motivational Research conducted before we redesigned the Goetz Beer packaging, it was discovered that the old standbys of beer packaging, the blatant, hot, dry reds were a far cry from the colors people associated with beer. In reality beer drinkers assocated blue and green with coolness and wetness, and these qualities with beer. Blue was chosen as the basic color for the label although this was quite a departure for beer packaging. Similarly, the new Piel's label is a deep satin-blue oval outlined in a subtle white swirl.

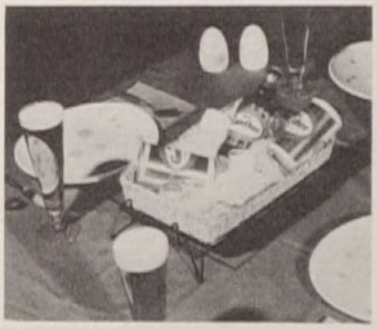
The total effect of the new Goetz label and packaging is mellow, soft and sensual, with the use of white and gold bands to complement the blue. Snow crystals above the name further the feeling of coolness as well as the sense of fun and gaiety. This color combination defies the old truism in beer packaging that red is a stand-out color and that what stands out best, sells best. It was felt, however, that when a package is placed on a super market shelf with thousands of others all striving in the same way for a stand out effect, the more unique and suggestive color combination would be the more eye-catching.

WOMEN AND BEER PACKAGING

Beer packaging must not only meet these various psychological requirements, but it must be usable in advertising, on TV, must stack and display well at the point of sale and, like most packaging, must fulfill a new requirement -- it must appeal to women.

Until recently it was said that beer brand decision was made by men although women did the actual buying. But of late, while men are still the major market, there has been increasing evidence of a more decisive role on the part of women in selecting brands. Aside from the necessity to make the beer her husband prefers available to her, it is becoming more and more possible to influence the family beer drinking habits by appealing to women directly.

It is the woman in the super market situation who is most strongly moved by packaging. The easier you make it for her to feel that the beer she purchases is not merely an indulgence for her husband, but a beer which will satisfy her own desires insofar as appearance and attractiveness are concerned, the more likely you are to persuade her to choose your brand.



I. & M-designed Gunther label, pleasing in table setting

Merchandising New Packaging

by HARRY PEARLMAN*
President, Swanee Paper Corporation

No matter how much careful thought, preparation and hard work goes into the production of a new package design for a product, the real pay-off -- and the real test -- does not come until that agonizing moment when it is first exposed to the market. For almost seven years, we had been operating with the old design for our Swanee line of paper products. For months we worked with the design team at Lippincott and Margulies to produce the new design which would take its place. Now that we had it, just exactly what were we going to do with it?

Of course, we had not waited until the final design was off the drawing boards and into production to make our decision. We had been involved in a careful reappraisal of the way in which we were to introduce the package during the entire process of design. When the package was ready, so were we.

EVALUATING THE NEW DESIGN

In selling paper goods -- towels, toilet tissues, napkins -- the package is the most direct possible expression of the product itself. Obviously, it's the woman who chooses the paper products for the home. We know that she chooses these paper products for their femininity, their softness, their quality -- and that the package is the key factor in transmitting these impressions. Also, we are most conscious of the new trend to more color in the home.

With Lippincott and Margulies we chose home decorator colors. We felt that L & M had designed a package which would induce the consumer to carry our products home, where they would fit right in with other contemporary home furnishings. All the different products were now family-related by the distinctive Swanee logotype, backed by the alternating striped "S" motif. On all packages the Swanee logo was now a pleasant charcoal gray. We felt too that the new packaging now expressed the quality of the product. For the competitive super market shelf we now had a package that would stand out.

* Harry Pearlman of Swanee has also directed several other large paper companies. He has been efficiency expert, industrial banker, and sales agent for publications and department stores. A leading citizen in the New York community, he is on the board of directors of two major hospitals.

GETTING BEFORE THE TRADE

An analysis of our sales and distribution had revealed that the first group to be convinced were the brokers through whom our products are sold to super markets. Next in importance, and of course crucial, were the dealers.

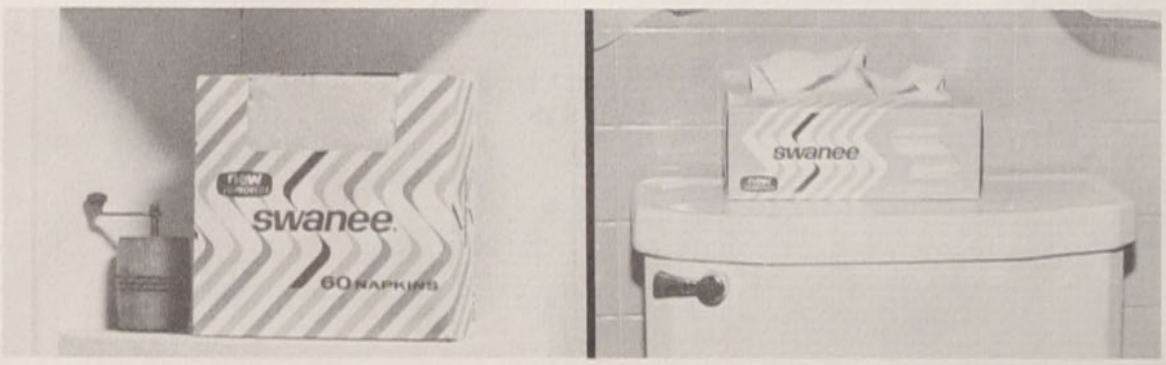
We deliberately discarded the concept of a direct mail approach to these merchants. We felt that the package itself, personally introduced to the dealer and broker, was the best method of presentation. We wanted to be able to give a complete "sales pitch" and answer any questions that might arise directly and on the spot.

This approach involved first influencing the brokers who would in turn sample top management and buying personnel among our point of sale distributors. Our introductory presentation included not only the package itself, but also a prepared statement. We stressed the fact that a top design firm had created the package and that this program represented a major capital investment for Swanee. We showed the dealer that the new package was not only different, in itself, but also that it had changed and vastly improved the character of the product itself. In fact, product quality had also been improved, along with changes in packaging design. We told the dealers the reasons for the new design -- its feminine orientation, the family relatedness to the packages, the "fiesta" effect of the various colored stocks keyed to the color of the contents. We outlined in full the large scale consumer advertising campaign that was to accompany introduction of the new packages in the super market.

WHAT WE'VE LEARNED ABOUT PACKAGING

In the course of working with Lippincott and Margulies, we feel we've learned enough to develop certain clearcut elements of a packaging psychology:

1) For special inducement merchandising, make sure the design includes space for locating special deals in a conspicuous spot.



New Swanee package finds "display room" in many a kitchen or bath.

2) The entire design -- the overall image -- must be easily recognized no matter how the package is stacked at the point of sale. We find that our tissue rolls are sometimes stacked upside down. But with this new design, it doesn't matter. There is still strong identification.

3) The design must be practical, adaptable to all of the various faces of the company. It must be applicable to ads, stationery, TV, trucks, cartons, business cards, etc.

4) It must be durable. The design must be contemporary enough to be modern now, yet advanced enough to stay modern for a period of time.

A New Booklet...

Designing a Brandmark for Today's Marketing, a 40 page booklet representing a ten year design study for management by Lippincott & Margulies, Inc., has been announced. Publication date is June 14.

The study discusses the role of the brand symbol in supporting brand names, and the ways in which designer and manufacturer can create or redesign a brandmark.

The first serious analysis of the graphic problems involved in brand name promotion, it contains this statement from Henry E. Abt, president of the Brand Names Foundation: "This report should be of interest to firms staking their future on brand acceptance."

The booklet defines "brandmark" as "the distinctive design often used as part of a package, product, or even a building. Immediately recognizable, it identifies the product or company and is employed consistently from year to year, despite model or product changes."

L&M *Lippincott & Margulies, Inc., Industrial Designers, 430 Park Avenue, New York*

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